

# Literature of Spain

May 5, 1850.

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## ART. IX.—LITERATURE OF SPAIN.\*

EARLY HISTORY OF SPAIN; THE SPANISH LANGUAGE; THE EARLY BALLADS; ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY; THE PARTIDAS; THE INQUISITION; CERVANTES AND DON QUIXOTE; LOPE DE VEGA AND CALDERON; DECLINE OF SPANISH LETTERS.—By THE EDITOR.

IT is with emotions of melancholy we are accustomed to regard the decline of Spain, and her glories faded into dust, from the high rank in the politics of Europe accorded, at one time, to her by universal consent. The victim of arbitrary and despotic power—the theater of court intrigues and revolutions—with a wealthy, dominant, but unscrupulous, hierarchy fattening upon the substance of the land, and repressing and crushing out the vital energies of the people by a system of intolerance the most perfect, and a total suppression of all light and knowledge; broken up, by almost impassable physical divisions, into provinces distinct in character, institutions and customs; without commerce or manufactures; with agriculture degraded to the lowest condition, and the landed interests monopolized by princes and nobles of Church and State; industry denied its accustomed motives, security and reward: such is Spain; and we naturally contrast her position with what it was when Charles V had extended his dominions too widely for the sun ever to set upon them—or when, at a still earlier period, her monarch parceled out the world by treaty, and reserved to himself, of its empire and its treasures, by far the greater and the wealthier part. The admonition is a solemn one, which it becomes us all to heed in the day of our pride, our arrogance and our power!

To imagine that the literature of a nation will not be influenced and determined by its political and social condition, would be in violation of all the teachings of experience. The history of Spain, in every period, confirms the judgment; and we gather, with a fidelity and truthfulness which is never once at fault, from the earliest ballads of the country—the chronicles, the books of chivalry, *romanceros* and dra-

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\* History of Spanish Literature, by George Ticknor. 3 vols. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1849. Glimpses of Spain, or Notes of an Unfinished Tour in 1847, by S. T. Wallis. Harper & Brothers. 1849.

ma—all the incidents and evidences of progress or decline of the Spanish people, through their romantic struggles, defeats and triumphs, from the earliest Moorish invasion to the present times.

We were in almost entire ignorance of the variety, richness and extent, of the literature of Spain, before the publication of the comprehensive work of Mr. Ticknor, referred to at the head of our article. The world is indebted to this gentleman for one of the most elaborate and faithful exhibitions of the literary progress and decay of a nation, at all times attracting a romantic interest, which has appeared in any language; and the scholar will not know which to admire most, the elegance of its arrangement and classic beauty of style, or the profound and enthusiastic researches, conducted amidst the buried, obscure and almost forgotten, records of the remote past.

The work of Ticknor, we need not say, is a credit to American literature, and, like those of Prescott and Irving, marks an epoch in its history. It has been the labor almost of a life—as the author tells us he began, as early as 1818, the collection of materials for it, in a visit to Spain, and has added to them ever since, until he has gathered the most magnificent collection of Spanish literary works to be found in America.

The volumes on our table possess a degree of interest and attraction, not to be surpassed by any that have been published in the present century, and open upon us a world as novel as that which the genius of Columbus made bare to the adventurers of Castile and Aragon.

No country in Europe has passed through a greater number of changes and revolutions than Spain. Its earliest records run back in antiquity to the Iberians, a fierce and warlike people who overspread the peninsula, and whose descendants are supposed to be the Biscayans, from many peculiarities in their institutions and manners of the present day. This people were overpowered by the Celts, who were among the earliest of those hordes that poured down upon Europe from Asia; but at what period the event occurred is involved in obscurity. The contest was long and terrible; and, when the races, at last, were extinguished in each other, their names were preserved in the appropriate appellation, derived from the two, *Celtiberian*. The reputation of the country for the precious metals attracted, soon after, the Phenicians, from across the Mediterranean; and they planted colonies near the pillars of Hercules, near Cadiz, and on the banks of the Guadalquivir—adding greatly thereby to their own wealth, rank and consequence. The Carthaginians, who were of the same race, after the first Punic war, took entire possession of the country, which they



at last yielded to the Scipios and the triumphant Roman armies, in the year 201, B. C. Two whole centuries of bloodshed and crime elapsed, before the Roman power was securely established in the peninsula.

The Romans introduced innumerable colonies into Spain, and with them all the civilization and refinement of Italy. On every hand was clearly recognized the influences of a power, which, having shaken the thrones of all the world, began itself to exhibit the tokens of decay. Extraordinary privileges were accorded to this favorite province, which, in return, contributed more than any other to the resources and wealth of the capital. The Latin became almost the language of the country—corrupted, it is true, on the introduction of Christianity, by ignorant ecclesiastics. The first foreigners elevated to the consulship, or honored with a public triumph, was Balbus, from Cadiz; and the first that occupied the throne of the Cæsars, was Trajan, a native of Seville. Portius Latro, a Spaniard, opened, in the metropolis, a school for Roman rhetoric, and numbered, among his pupils, Octavius Cæsar, Mæcenas, Marcus Agrippa and Ovid. The two Senecas, Lucan, Martial, Columella, the able writer on agriculture, and, probably, Quinctilian, were also natives of Spain.

The fifth century introduced a new and melancholy era in the history of southern Europe, and witnessed every trace of civilization and progress swept away in wreck and ruin, by the barbarian hordes, who, emerging from the northern fastnesses of Asia, from Tartary and from Germany, tumultuously passed the Rhine and possessed themselves, by easy conquest, of the gardens of the world.

In the character of her conquerors Spain was fortunate. The Goths had already occupied Italy, and become acquainted with its laws, manners and language. The Visigoths were converts to Christianity, and exhibited a remarkable disposition for law and order, as we perceive, in the criminal and civil code adopted by them, among the first measures of administration. Their language, being unwritten, remained barbarous and but slightly affiliated with the corrupted Latin which continued to maintain its rank. The union of the two languages, at last, went very far toward the production of the modern Spanish.

But Spain was destined to another great convulsion, whose influences extended over eight centuries, and are associated with nearly every thing that is chivalrous, romantic and glorious, in her early history. The followers of Mohammed had overrun Asia, Egypt, and all the north of Africa. They descended upon Spain, and, in the battle of the Gaudalete, and in the three succeeding years, shattered to pieces the Gothic power, except in the north-west, where, under Pelayo, the

Christians had taken refuge. From this point began those heroic but desperate struggles—in which were involved, on the one hand, all the associations of home, of nationality and religion; and, on the other, the pride, the power and splendor, of the Mohammedan empire—lasting through eight hundred years, and only brought to a close, after the fall of Granada witnessed the triumph of Christian power, and the banner of the Cross floating over the Alhambra, and over every wall and tower of the peninsula.

The Moorish power in Spain was marked by much that was glorious in civilization, in luxury and letters; and, amid the darkness and gloom which had settled upon Europe, shone forth with steady and almost dazzling brightness. Men of letters congregated there from all the world, attracted by its libraries, its schools and its scholars; and many of the regenerating influences which, long afterward, dissipated the night of the middle ages, may be traced to the intellectual empires of Cordova and Granada.

The Gothicized Latin of the Christians, coming now in intimate association with the Arabic, a more polished and refined one, adopted many of its forms, and borrowed copiously from its vocabulary. The change was gradual and continuous, and, about the middle of the twelfth century, the amalgamated elements had risen to the dignity of a written language, known, ever since, as the Castilian, or Spanish. From this period is traced the history of Spanish literature.

Here we recognize, according to Mr. Ticknor, the existence, in Spain, of a language, spreading gradually throughout the greater part of the country, different from the pure or the corrupted Latin, and still more different from the Arabic, yet obviously formed by a union of both, modified by the analogies and spirit of the Gothic constructions and dialects, and containing some remains of the vocabularies of the Spanish tribes, of the Iberians, the Celts and the Phenicians, who, at different periods, had occupied nearly or quite the whole of the peninsula. This language was called, originally, the *Romance*, because it was so much formed out of the language of the Romans; later it was called *Spanish*, and at last, more frequently, called *Castilian*, from that portion of the country whose political power grew to be so predominant, as to give its dialect a preponderance over all others. The proportion of all these elements is estimated, by Sarmiento: six-tenths of Latin origin, one-tenth Greek and ecclesiastical, one-tenth northern, one-tenth Arabic, one-tenth East Indian, American, Gipsey, modern German, French and Italian.

The remarks which we shall now venture upon the literature and writers of Spain, will be arranged under the three great divisions



adopted by Mr. Ticknor, and, as our space is limited, will necessarily be brief and imperfect:

Period I.—OF SPANISH LITERATURE, FROM THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY TO THE EMPIRE OF CHARLES V.

Period II.—FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTEENTH TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Period III.—FROM THE ACCESSION OF THE BOURBON FAMILY TO THE INVASION OF BONAPARTE.

The first of these periods embraces all those elements which are entirely native, and which were developed during the protracted struggles of Christians and Moors, partaking, both in their poetry and prose, in a high degree, of the wild and heroic character of times, such as the old chroniclers describe, when "kings and counts and nobles, and all the knights that took pride in arms, stabled their horses in the rooms where they slept with their wives, to the end that, when they heard the war cry, they might find their horses and arms at hand, and mount instantly at its summons." The second period marks the imitation of Provencial and Italian refinement, and a departure from the original genius and spirit—whilst the two together furnish the main elements and characteristics of the present literature of Spain.

The first known author in the Castilian was one Gonzalo, a priest, who lived about 1240, and wrote an octavo volume of poems, mostly of the religious order. The following, from his Mourning of the Virgin at the Cross, is very life-like:

"My son, in me and thee life still was felt as one;  
I loved thee much, and thou lovedst me in perfectness, my son;  
My faith in thee was sure, and I thy faith had won,  
And doth thy large and pitying fate forget me now, my son?  
My son, forget me not, but take my soul with thine—  
The earth holds but one heart that kindred is with mine,  
John, whom thou gav'st to be my child, who here with me doth pine:  
I pray thee, then, that to my prayer thou graciously incline."

Previously to this, however, there are many anonymous poems, the most celebrated of which is that of the Cid, consisting of about three thousand lines. The Cid was a popular hero of the chivalrous age of Spain, and the poem narrates, with stirring graphic, yet rude, power, the long series of glorious exploits, that marked his eventful and splendid military career. It is, besides, a faithful and simple picture of the manners, customs and institutions, of that romantic period. We shall extract two passages; the first describing the challenge of Munio Gustioz to Assar Gonzales, at the meeting of the Cortes:

Assar Gonzales was entering at the door,  
With his ermine mantle trailing along the floor;  
With his sauntering pace and his hardy look,  
Of manners, or of courtesy, little heed he took;

He was hot and flushed with breakfast and with drink.  
 "What, ho! my masters, your spirits seem to sink!  
 Have we no new and stirring from the Cid, Ruy Diaz, of Bivar?  
 Has he been to Riodivirna, to besiege the windmills there?  
 Does he tax the millers for their toll? or is that practice past?  
 Will he make a match for his daughters—another like the last?"  
 Munio Gustioz rose and made reply:  
 "Traitor, wilt thou never cease to slander and to lie?  
 You breakfast before mass, you drink before you pray;  
 There is no honor in your heart, nor truth in what you say;  
 You cheat your comrade and your lord, you flatter to betray.  
 Your hatred I despise, your friendship I defy.  
 False to all mankind, and most to God on high,  
 I shall force you to confess that what I say is true."  
 Thus was ended the parley and challenge betwixt these two.

The next known author in Castilian literature is Alfonso the Tenth, or, as he is distinguished in history, "Alfonso the wise." A poet and a philosopher, it was said of him, "he was more fit for letters than for the government of his subjects; he studied the heavens and watched the stars, but forgot the earth and lost his kingdom." To this monarch the world is indebted for that code which has had so wide an influence for its wisdom and equity, and which, at this day, constitutes almost the common law of Spain—the "*Partidas*." This valuable work was undertaken in 1263 or 1265, and called *Las Siete Partidas*, or the "seven parts," from the number of divisions contained. It is distinguished in general for a peaceful and polished style, working upon the materials of the Decretals, the Digest and Code of Justinian, the *Fuero Juzgo*, a collection of Visigoth laws made by St. Ferdinand, the father of Alfonso, and other Spanish and foreign authorities. The *Partidas*, however, differs very much in nature and character from the Justinian and Napoleon codes, and is rather a collection of legal, moral and religious treatises, systematically arranged. It abounds in discussions of various kinds, and presents, according to Mr. Ticknor, a digested result of the readings of a learned monarch and his coadjutors in the thirteenth century, on the relative duty of a king and his subjects, and on the entire legislation and police, ecclesiastical, civil and moral, to which, in their opinion, Spain should be subjected; the whole interspersed with discussions, sometimes more quaint than grave, etc., etc.

This code, though it was not for nearly a century recognized as of binding authority in Spain, has ever afterward maintained the highest rank in that country and her colonies, and, since the annexation of Louisiana and Florida to the United States, has been consulted constantly and applied by our jurists.

As this is a matter of deep interest to a large portion of our coun-



trymen, we are tempted to go more than we otherwise would into detail in its discussion. The *old code* of Louisiana, 1808, digested by Moreau Lislet and James Brown, according to Judge Martin, was based, among other sources of authority, upon the *Partidas*; and he tells us, in another place, that the *Fuero Viejo*, *Fuero Juzgo*, *Partidas Recopilaciones Leyes de las Indias*, *Autos Acordados*, and *Royal Schedules*, remained parts of the written law of the Territory at the period of the purchase, when not repealed expressly or by implication. Few if any copies of some of these were in the hands of the lawyers. "To explain them, Spanish commentators were consulted, and the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, and its own commentators. To eke out any deficiency, the lawyers who came from France or Hispaniola read Pothier, D'Agnesseau, Dumoulin, &c.\* In *Beard v. Poydras* (4 Martin's Reports, 368), the old supreme court considered O'Reilly's publication of the Spanish laws, etc., as the introduction of the Spanish code in all its parts, into the province. Afterward in the elaborate and splendid decision read by Porter, in *Saul v. his creditors* (5 N. S., 576) it was held, where our own statutes furnish no guide for decision, recourse must be had to the Spanish laws as they formerly existed in this State. After the publication of the new civil code of 1826 and the act of 1828, abolishing the French, Spanish and Roman laws, the court (in 13 L. R., 198) held the repeal as extending only to the positive, written or statute laws of those nations, and only such as were introductory of a new rule, and *not to those which were merely declaratory*. It was not intended to abrogate the principles of law settled by the decisions of courts of justice. There are other decisions upon the same point, and the one in 10 L. R., 99, considers the repeal *perfect* for all Spanish laws in force after the promulgation of the code of 1808. The new constitution, 1845, declares (Tit. ix, art. 142) all laws in force at the adoption of this constitution and not inconsistent therewith, shall continue as if the same had not been adopted.

The *Partidas* are discussed in Wheaton's Report of Cases in the U. S. Supreme Court, vol. v, appendix, and also in other important cases before the same tribunal (Wheaton, vol. 3, p. 202). A translation of the entire work, with notes, was published in New Orleans, in 1820, by Moreau Lislet & Henry Carleton, in two volumes. We extract the following references to the original from the preface:

"The *Partidas*, of which we will now speak, is the most perfect system of Spanish laws, and may be advantageously compared with any code published in the most enlightened ages of the world. These laws, the unceasing subject of the praise and admiration of every ju-

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\* History Louisiana, volume ii, p. 292.

rist acquainted with them, were compiled in imitation of the Roman pandects, and may be considered as the digest of the laws of Spain, containing, in addition to the canonical ordinances, all the civil laws in force in that kingdom at the time of their promulgation. Ferdinand III had projected that great work, in order to prevent confusion and diversity in the jurisprudence of the empire, by establishing uniform rules of legal decision. But the sudden death of that monarch prevented the execution of a project which was afterward accomplished by the wisdom of Alphonso, his son and successor. Alphonso nominated four Spanish juriconsults, to whom he committed the execution of the intended work. These enlightened men, whose names have not come down to us, entered upon the arduous task in the year 1256, and actually accomplished it in the space of seven years. They borrowed from the canonical laws of Spain, all those parts of the new code which relate to matters of a religious nature. Those which relate to civil and criminal matters, were taken from those usages and customs which the law-giver thought fit to preserve, but principally from the Roman laws, which the compilers freely translated almost literally, although they carefully avoided confessing that fact.

The Partidas may, therefore, be considered as containing the fundamental principles of the law of Spain. And when we reflect that they were compiled amid the tumult of arms and almost perpetual wars waged by that kingdom against the Moors, and in an age when most of the states of Europe were without any regular systems of jurisprudence, our admiration of this code is raised to the highest pitch. Yet we should reflect, that, even at that time, the Spaniards were preparing themselves to act the wonderful part they sustained under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, and the still more brilliant one of Charles V: that the spirit of chivalry had already softened the asperity of early manners; that the Moors had introduced in Spain the arts and the love of letters, which they had brought over with them from Africa, and that the pandects of Justinian had, some time before, been found at Amalfi, and were everywhere studied, so as greatly to facilitate the execution of this work."

Among the earliest monuments of Spanish literature, the "Ballads" occupy a distinguished place. The first lisplings of the muse seem to have taken this form, for which it is not difficult to account, considering the extraordinary character of the times. Those which have been preserved to us in the various collections, and which, no doubt, suffered mutilation in their long traditionary passage, are very numerous, breathe a spirit of genuine poetic fervor, religion, patriotism and chivalry; and, being the product of a people more advanced in civilization and refinement, are considered greatly superior in literary excellence to the early Scotch and English ballads. They are purely *Castilian*, and expressive of the national sympathies and spirit in so high and perfect a degree, as to be sung by the muleteers of Spain of the present day precisely as they were heard by Don Quixote in his adventures to Toboso. Love, war, religion, chivalry and heroism, are their sub-



jects; and, partaking of the spirit of those glorious struggles for God, liberty and nationality, which for so many hundred years were displayed by the Christians of Spain, they burn with all the fires of a lofty and genuine inspiration. The authors and dates of most of these are unknown, and the collection, as embraced in the "*Romanceros Generales*," consists of above a thousand poems. The reader will be obliged to us for a few specimens abstracted from the general mass. Count Claros is taken to task by his uncle, the Archbishop, for excess of gallantry, and, in reply, immortalizes his name as synonymous, all over Spain, with that of "true lover" and knight. The Archbishop would seem to have been no admirer of the tender sex:

"It grieves me, Count, it grieves my heart,  
That thus they urge thy fate;  
Since this fond guilt upon thy part  
Was still no crime of state.  
For all the errors love can bring,  
Deserve not mortal pain;  
And I have knelt before the King,  
To free thee from thy chain:  
But he, the King, with angry pride,  
Would hear no word I spoke;  
'The sentence is pronounced,' he cried,  
'Who may its power revoke?'

'The Infanta's love you won,' he says,  
'When you her guardian were.'  
O, cousin, less, if you were wise,  
For ladies you would care.  
For he that labors most for them  
Your fate will always prove,  
Since death or ruin none escape,  
Who trust their dangerous love."  
'O uncle, uncle, words like these  
A true heart never hears;  
For I would rather die to please,  
Than live and not be theirs."

A true and Christian knight, was this Count Claros, whose memory should be enshrined in the heart of every love-sick swain or maiden, while time shall last. The Archbishop, we doubt not, ventured upon no other lecture, but abandoned the case as a hopeless one; and Archbishops have been equally successful from the days of Count Claros to our own. We now give a beautiful fragment, which marks the manners and events of the times when Moor and Christian were in constant and deadly conflict:

I was the Moorish maid, Morayma,  
I was that maiden, dark and fair;  
A Christian came, he seemed in sorrow—  
Full of falsehood came he there.  
Moorish he spoke—he spoke it well—  
"Open the door, thou Moorish maid,  
So shalt thou be by Allah blessed;  
So shall I save my forfeit head."  
"But how can I, alone and weak,  
Unbar and know not who is there?"

"But I'm the Moor, the Moor Mazote,  
The brother of thy mother dear:  
A Christian fell beneath my hand.  
The alcalde comes, he comes apace,  
And if thou open not thy door,  
I perish here before thy face."  
I rose in haste, I rose in fear,  
I seized my cloak, I missed my vest,  
And rushing to the fatal door,  
I threw it wide at his behest.

On the death of Ferdinand and the division of the kingdom between his children, the Cid approaches Zamora, a town which fell to one of the daughters, in the service of her brother, who wages a bloody war. This daughter, from one of the high towers, thus addresses the warrior, who was formerly her lover:

Away, away! proud Roderic!  
Castilian proud, away!  
Bethink thee of that olden time,  
That happy, honored day,

When, at St. James's holy shrine,  
Thy knighthood first was won;  
When Ferdinand, my royal sire,  
Confessed thee for his son.

He gave thee then thy knightly arms,  
My mother gave thy steed;  
Thy spurs were buckled by these hands,  
That thou no grace might'st need.

And had not chance forbid the vow,  
I thought with thee to wed;  
But Count Lozano's daughter fair,  
Thy happy bride was led.

With her came wealth, an ample store,  
But power was mine and state;  
Broad lands are good, and have their grace,  
*But he that reigns is great.*

Thy wife is well, thy match was wise;  
Yet, Roderic! at thy side  
A vassal's daughter sits by thee,  
And not a royal bride!

We conclude this department, however, unwillingly, with the simple and touchingly beautiful ballad, where an elder sister reproaches the younger, on noticing her first symptoms of love. It would seem that the tender inspiration differed little five hundred years ago and now, and its unmistakeable signs are as recognizable in our day, in Laura, Mary, Sally or Betsy, as in simple "little Jane" in the ballad:

Her sister, Miguella,  
Once chid little Jane,  
And the words that she spoke  
Gave a great deal of pain:

"You went, yesterday, playing,  
A child, like the rest;  
And now you come out,  
More than other girls, dressed.

"You take pleasure in sighs,  
In sad music delight;  
With the dawning you rise,  
Yet sit up half the night.

"When you take up your work,  
You look vacant and stare,  
And gaze on your sampler,  
But miss the stitch there.

"You're in love, people say—  
Your actions all show it;  
New ways we shall have  
When mother shall know it.

"She'll nail up the windows  
And lock up the door;  
Leave to frolic and dance  
She will give us no more.

"Old aunt will be sent  
To take us to mass,  
And stop all our talk  
With the girls as we pass.

"And when we walk out,  
She will bid our old shrew  
Keep a faithful account  
Of what our eyes do;

"And mark who goes by,  
If I peep through the blind,  
And be sure to detect us  
In looking behind.

"Thus for your idle follies,  
Must I suffer, too,

And, though nothing I've done,  
Be punished like you?"

"O sister Miguella,  
Your chiding pray spare;  
That I've troubles, you guess,  
But not what they are.

"Young Pedro it is,  
Old Juan's fair youth;  
But he's gone to the wars,  
And where is his truth?

"I loved him sincerely,  
I loved all he said;  
But I fear he is fickle,  
I fear he is fled!

"He is gone of free choice,  
Without summons or call,  
And 'tis foolish to love him  
Or like him at all."

"Nay, rather do thou  
To God pray above,  
Lest Pedro return,  
And again you should love,"

Said Miguella, in jest,  
As she answered poor Jane,  
"For when love has been bought  
At cost of such pain,

"What hope is there, sister,  
Unless the soul part,  
That the passion you cherish  
Should yield up your heart?

"Your years will increase,  
But so will your pains,  
And this you may learn  
From the proverb's old strains:

"If when but a child  
Love's power you own,  
Pray what will you do  
When you older are grown?"



Passing over the other two divisions, into which the first period of Spanish literature resolves itself, viz., the Chronicles, or exaggerated histories of the achievements and heroes of the country, and the Drama, then forming upon a religious basis, we come to those most extraordinary productions, which, in the early period of many European nations, and in none in so high a degree as in Spain, exercised a wide and deep influence upon the popular mind, and exhibited themselves in so many various and grotesque forms—the *Romances of Chivalry*. They belong to an age when arms were the pursuit of every gentleman, and infused their spirit into all ranks—even the lowest—of society. Accustomed, as the common people were, to hear—recorded in the most popular of all literature, the ballads—the achievements of their favorite heroes; and the knights and gentry to gather from the Chronicles the more sober and systematic, yet, in many respects, equally fictitious and exaggerated, accounts of the same persons and events; it was not remarkable that a style of composition should be demanded and come into vogue, intermediate between the two, and devoted to a similar class of subjects, but resting wholly upon a fictitious basis. It is to this period that we trace the origin of modern romance writing, which has, in all countries, become a powerful agency in determining society and manners, and to which ancient history furnishes no counterpart. If the *Romances of Chivalry* seem to us a preposterous and absurd creation, we are not the less to accord to many of them a high degree of literary merit and a controlling influence upon manners and institutions, for several hundred years, down almost to the period when Cervantes, in the adventures of Don Quixote, waged his relentless and exterminating warfare. Ridiculous as they were, the evidences are too strong to be resisted, that, not only among the common people, but even in the higher ranks of society, these fictions were received and believed as *faithful* and *true* records of the achievements of *actual* knights and heroes, who had made the world famous by their high and chivalrous deeds; and the minds of men were prepared for so extraordinary credulity, by the Chronicles, which pretended to historical accuracy, and the course of the mother church and its cunning priests, who demanded an unquestioning faith in the silliest and most ridiculous supernatural interventions and miracles, upon almost every day in the calendar.

France would seem to have given origin to this style of fiction, though the growth which it afterward took upon the soil of Spain was infinitely more luxurious and flourishing. As early as the twelfth century, the French were acquainted with "Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table," and "Charlemagne and his Peers," introduced from

Brittany into Normandy. These and other old fictions furnished the material out of which were elaborated the wild creations of Ariosto, Spenser, Wieland, etc. It was not until the middle of the fifteenth century, that we trace their existence in Spain. The first in rank, in merit and influence, and the head of a long and almost interminable series, is the world-famous fiction of "*Amadis of Gaul*," which was a translation from the Portuguese. It ran immediately through many editions in the French, Italian and Spanish languages, and was received with an enthusiasm which has never been surpassed. The events of the book carry us back to the Christian era, and illustrate a pattern of knighthood, "perfect in courage and in chastity." Amadis is an imaginary character and son of the king of Gaula. His birth is illegitimate, and he is found upon the sea and carried to England and Scotland. He falls in love with Oriana, the daughter of the English king. His legitimate brother is Galaor, the son of the king of Gaula, who has married Elisena, the mother of Amadis. "The adventures of these two knights (natural brothers), partly in England, France, Germany and Turkey, and partly in unknown regions and amidst enchantments—sometimes under favor of their ladies, and sometimes, as in the hermitage of the Firm Island, under their frowns—fill up the book, which, after the broad journeyings of the principal knights, and incredible numbers of combats between them and other knights, magicians and giants, ends at last in the marriage of Amadis and Oriana, and the overthrow of all the enchantments that had so long opposed their love."

The *Amadis de Gaul* was followed by the stories of "Esplandian," "The History of Florisando," "Lisuarte of Greece," "The most Wonderful Amadis of Greece," "Don Florisel de Ninquea," "Anaxartes, Son of Lisuarte," "Don Silves de la Selva," "Leandro the Fair," and "The Roman des Romans," which was a kind of digest of all the preceding, etc. "The Palmerin de Oliva" and the "Palmerin of England" belong also to the same class, and the latter is said to be inferior only to Amadis de Gaul, of which it will be remembered that Cervantes makes the barber and the curate thus discourse in Don Quixote:

"'There is something mysterious about this matter,' said the curate; 'for, as I have heard, this was the first book of knight-errantry that was printed in Spain, and all the others have had their origin and source here; so that, as the arch-heretic of so mischievous a sect, I think he should, without a hearing, be condemned to the fire.' 'No, sir,' said the barber; 'for I too have heard that it is the best of all the books of its kind that have been written, and, therefore, for its sin-



gularity, it ought to be forgiven.' 'That is the truth,' answered the curate, 'and so let us spare it for the present.'"\*

Our space will not permit any notice of the origin and progress of the courtly school, in the first period of Spanish literature, terminating with the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. For nearly four centuries, the national spirit had advanced and produced results in civilization, refinement and letters, far beyond what could be furnished in the history of cotemporary nations. We witness the "first efforts of a generous people to emancipate themselves from the cold restraints of a merely material existence; and watch, with confidence and sympathy, the movement of their secret feelings and prevalent energies, as they are struggling upward into the poetry of a native and earnest enthusiasm, persuaded that they must at last work out for themselves a literature bold, fervent and original, marked with the features and impulses of the national character, and able to vindicate for itself a place among the permanent monuments of modern civilization." This brilliant prospect, unfortunately, was destined too soon to be blasted by the introduction—through the growing intolerance and bigotry of the times, sustained by the authority of Ferdinand and Isabella themselves—of the *Inquisition*, which had been so formidable an engine against the Albigenses in Provence. The dark, terrible and noiseless machinery of this accursed tribunal, carrying dismay and death into the ranks of Moors and Jews, was soon brought to bear upon all classes of society, and, with the progress of the Reformation, crushed, in Spain, the very life and soul of all that was bright or glorious in her rising civilization.

The two centuries which followed witnessed the growth of Spanish military glory, in the new and wider arena of foreign conquest and empire. Charles the Fifth marched steadily forward, extending the dominions of Spain over the greater part of the world, and creating a realm for Philip the Second, upon which, it was exultingly said, the sun never set. The Reformation, which, in every other country, was

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\* Among the other fictions, of the same stamp with Amadis, are "Belianis of Greece," "Olivante de Laura," "Felixmarte of Hircania," "The Renowned Knight Cifar," "The Bold Knight of Claribalte," "The Invincible Knight Lepolemo," "Romance of Merlin," "Tristan de Leonnais," "The Holy Cup," "Reynoldos de Montalban," "Cleomadez," "Cestial Chivalry," "Knight of the Bright Star," and "The Christian Knight, the Conqueror of Heaven." Many of these last were of a religious character, and full of wild and exaggerated lives of the saints and martyrs, and cunningly devised fables, to increase the power and influence of the priesthood, who could not allow so powerful a medium of influencing the masses to be monopolized by knight-errantry and arms. The reader will remember the amusing account which Cervantes gives of Don Quixote's library.

producing convulsions which shook the very foundations of society, could find no admission into Spain. There the Inquisition, with the most perfect organization, anticipated its approaches. A papal bull authorized Charles V to have prepared a list of books pertaining to Protestantism, dangerous to be read in his dominion, and the penalty of death was decreed by Philip II upon whoever should keep, buy or sell, any book included within the list known as the *Index Expurgatorius* of the Inquisition. What was now a war against Protestantism came soon to be one upon letters. The first scholars of the age, in every branch of learning, were made amenable to this tribunal, and a censorship of the press was established, more stringent and degrading than history has ever recorded before or since. The marks of this subserviency cannot but be distinctly recognized in the pages of every author, and in the total absense of that spirit of freedom and boldness so indispensably necessary to all literary excellence.

The more frequent intercourse which was now springing up with Italy introduced into Spain a character of composition and a class of writers who are designated as of the *Italian School*. The first of these was *Boscan*, whose friend, *Garcilasso de la Vega*, is said to have carried the best forms of Italian verse to a height they never afterward reached in Spanish poetry. This young man, after a brilliant life in the field, and after many heroic achievements, died at the early age of thirty-three, leaving behind him a volume of poems. Among the other writers of this school, were *Acuna*, *Antonio de Villegas*, *Gregorio Silvestre* and *Diego Mendoza*, the last of whom combined a life of military adventure with one of high literary effort and scholarship.

The discovery of America produced an order of historical writings in Spain, which is worthy of our attention. The *Relaciones* of *Hernando Cortez*, which were the elaborate reports of that commander of whatever he saw and did in the New World, are among the first. He was succeeded by *Francisco Lopez de Gomara*, who sketched the adventures of Cortez, and contributed a *History of the Indies*. The mistakes of this writer, who followed Cortez implicitly, and was his secretary, were corrected by *Bernal Diaz*. *Gonzalo Fernandes de Oveido* published, in 1535, the *Natural and General History of the Indies*, in fifty books, followed, in 1561, by the great work of *Las Casas* upon the same subject. *Nunez de Vaca's* account of his *Shipwreck and Captivity in Florida*, the *Conquest of Peru*, by *Xerez*, and the similar work by *Carate*, belong also to this era. The Smithsonian Institute, it is understood, intend the publication of a complete index of all the early works, in every language, relating to the discovery and colonization of America.



The remainder of what we have time to say upon the second division of Spanish literary history, will be included in a notice of Miguel Cervantes and the editions of Don Quixote, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Spanish proverbs, and the decay of Spanish character.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, though of poor and humble parentage, belonged yet to a family which claimed a long line of noble ancestry, often distinguished in the service of their country. He tells us that poetry and the drama were his passion at the earliest age, and that his reading extended through everything down to the mutilated scraps of paper he picked up in the streets. At twenty-three, he served as chamberlain to the Spanish minister, at the Court of Rome, but left the post immediately after and joined, as a foot soldier, the armament under Don John of Austria, against the Turks, under the conviction, it would seem, "that none make better soldiers than those who are transplanted from the region of letters to the fields of war, and that never scholar became a soldier that was not a good and a brave one." During five years his service was of the most eventful and brilliant character; and, in the famous fight of Lepanto, which arrested the progress of the Turks, he received several wounds, and lost the use of one of his arms for life. Returning from these wars, he was carried into slavery by the Algerines, who found him no submissive or tractable subject, judging from his numerous conspiracies and rebellions, and the remark of the old Dey, "If he could but keep that lame Spaniard well guarded, he should consider his capital, his slaves and his galleys, safe." Ransomed at last, his love of military excitement and glory led him into the Portuguese wars, waged by Philip the second. From this period begins that literary career which has placed him at the head of his countrymen, and which, no doubt, for centuries to come, will win the applause and fame of the civilized world. His first production, *The Galatea*, a pastoral romance, was never finished; its object, the favor of his lady-love, having been, it is said, accomplished in the mean while. When the barber and the curate are searching Don Quixote's library, they light upon this volume, "But what book is the next one?" said the curate. "The *Galatea*, of Miguel de Cervantes," replied the barber. "This Cervantes," said the curate, "has been a great friend of mine these many years, and I know that he is more skilled in sorrows than in verse. His book is not without happiness in the invention; it proposes something, but finishes nothing. So we must wait for the second part," &c. The book was, of course, spared. The *Galatea* was followed by several plays, possessing more or less of merit, but not so successful as to rescue the author from poverty and suffering. He removed to Seville, and filled, for many

years, an humble office connected with the revenues, and, being a defaulter in a petty sum, was imprisoned. He besought the king, to no purpose, for an appointment in America. There is a tradition of his being afterward employed to collect monastic rents, in La Mancha, where the angry debtors threw him into prison—within whose walls, to avenge himself, he began to write Don Quixote, and gave him a nativity in La Mancha. He admits, himself, that it was begun in prison, without saying where. His residence, a few years later, at Valladolid, marked by an account, in his own hand-writing, of sewing work done by his sister, and his imprisonment as a witness, evince no improvement in his wretched fortunes. In 1604, Don Quixote was licensed at Valladolid, and published the next year in Madrid. In 1609, he joined the brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament, a religious order which men of letters affected, for the ease and retirement it afforded. Among the brothers was Lope de Vega, a name as famous in Spain as that of Cervantes, but the relationship of the two seemed ever to have been marked with some reserve, attributed, by many, to envy of each other's fame and reputation. The other works of Cervantes, are his "Moral Tales" (*Novelas Exemplares*), his "Journey to Parnassus," a poem of little merit, and several comedies and plays of no very high reputation or success. In 1615, he published the *second part* of Don Quixote, and, the year after, concluded "*Persilles & Sigismunda*," the preface of which concludes—"Farewell to jesting, farewell my merry humors, farewell my gay friends, for I feel that I am dying." This was the last act of a man fast verging upon seventy years.

The mission of Don Quixote was to exterminate from the world the wild fictions of chivalry, which, from the lowest to the highest classes of society, were universally read and credited, and which had become such a public nuisance, as to be prohibited in the colonies, and, in the opinion of the *Cortes*, to deserve to be burnt in every part of Spain. Cervantes himself evinces how closely and deeply he had studied these books; but his own inimitable satire of the *Ingenious Knight of La Mancha* made an end to them forever, by its exterminating warfare. A solitary instance, says Mr. Ticknor, of the power of genius, to destroy, by a single well-timed blow, an entire department, and that a favored and flourishing one, in the literature of a great and proud nation.

Between the appearance of the first and second part of Don Quixote, a period of many years, a Dominican monk, stealing the thunder of Cervantes, had the affrontery to publish what he called the second part of Don Quixote. This brought down upon his devoted head the bitter ire and denunciation of Cervantes, who pursues him, throughout



the genuine *second part*, with relentless indignation, contumely and rage. "A pretty kind of a history writer, cried Sancho, and a deal must he know of our affairs, if he calls Teresa Pansa, my wife, Mary Gutierrez. Take the book again, sir, and see if I am put into it, and if he has changed my name, too." "Well, heaven forgive him, said Sancho, but I think he might have left me in my corner without troubling himself about me, for—Let him play that knows the way, and Saint Peter at Rome is well off at home."

The second part of *Don Quixote* possesses even higher merit than the first, and both the characters (of the knight and Sancho) assume a new and more elevated rank. Here the squire appears in the new position of governor of Barataria, and pours forth his interminable volley of proverbs, in spite of the entreaties, and to the no small annoyance, of his master. The whole work is, however, marked with many inconsistencies, and much confusion as to dates, events, &c., as, for instance, "it began to draw toward evening," said of a party who had been carousing at supper; Sancho's wife is called by different names, and Sancho is found riding on the ass, which, but the day before, Gines de Pasamonte had stolen, &c. Over all these errors, after some attempts to correct, the author "laughed heartily at last, as things of little consequence to himself, or to anybody else."

LOPE DE VEGA, who was a cotemporary of Cervantes, as previously remarked, was also, like him, seduced, at an early period, into the military profession—attaching himself, in despair of winning the hand of a fair dame, to the "Invincible Armada," then fitting out for the overthrow of English Protestantism, and using up, as he tells us, for wadding, the verses he had written in her praise. At a subsequent period he takes holy orders, and, as an officer of the Inquisition, shared an active part in the burning of a Franciscan monk for heresy. The same spirit of intolerance is observed in his *Dragantea*, where Queen Elizabeth is termed the "scarlet lady of Babylon," a spirit, by the way, characteristic of the age, as we see in the little ballad:

"And Baxtolo, my brother,  
To England forth has gone,  
Where the Drake [Sir Francis] he means to kill.  
And the Lutherans, every one,  
Excommunicate from God;  
Their queen, among the first,  
He will capture, and bring back  
Like heretics accurst.

And he promises, moreover,  
Among his spoils and gains,  
A heretic young serving boy  
To give me, bound in chains.  
And, for my lady grand-mamma,  
Whose years such waiting crave,  
A handy little Lutheran,  
To be her maiden slave."

This extraordinary man, like Pope, may be said to have "lisped first in poetry;" for, at five years of age, and before he had learned to write, he dictated verses to his school fellows, and could read Latin as well as Spanish. For forty or fifty years he occupied the first rank among the

authors of Spain, and, indeed, of the world; and his comedies and plays, of which the number was almost without limit, were performed in France, in Italy—at Rome and Constantinople. No man ever lived who exercised, for so long a period, an influence, apparently illimitable; and ever afterward, whatever was most distinguished in Spain for excellence in letters, art or nature, was, and is now, characterized, in compliment to him, “a Lope.” Of the plays which he wrote, but a fourth part were published, which appear in twenty-eight volumes: His friend, Montalvan, fixed the whole number at *eighteen hundred plays and four hundred autos*, and the rapidity with which they flew from under his pen was so wonderful, that, he tells us, of one of them, it was written and acted in five days; and, Montalvan adds, that, in fifteen days, five full length dramas were written by him in Toledo, and the first act of another, without an apparent effort! With all his prodigious successes in the various fields of literature, and the immense sums realized thereby, his habits of extravagance and expense were of so boundless a nature that he was always poor, and died, at last, leaving a penniless daughter. No higher tribute could have been paid to this literary colossus, than that of Cervantes, who spoke of him as “that great prodigy of nature, Lope de Vega, who has raised himself to the monarchy of the theater, subjected it to his control, and placed its actors under his jurisdiction; filled the world with his plays, and, if any persons have desired to enter into competition and share the glory of his labors, all they have done, when put together, would not equal the half of what has been done by him alone!”

The next name in Spanish dramatic literature, is that of PEDRO CALDERON, the successor and rival of De Vega, and the head of a dramatic school. For half a century he continued to wield an extensive empire over the hearts of his countrymen; and the whole length of his reign, and that of his distinguished competitor for the glory of the Spanish stage, reached an extent of ninety years! A catalogue of his dramatic works, in his own hand, shows one hundred and eighty-one full length dramas and sacramental autos, a part of which only have been found.

The PROVERBS of Spain, to which Sancho Panza gave so much celebrity, and which Don Quixote entitles “short sentences drawn from long experience,” have grown to a degree of luxuriance which no other language has equalled. The first collection of them was made by the Marquis of Santillana, in 1508; and, forty years afterward, Valles published an alphabetical series of 4,300 of them. Another collection, by Hernan Nunez, reached 6,000. There have been various other collections, the one by Val de Penas, being illustrated by the correspond-



ing Latin adages—and that of Juan de Yriarte, published about 1750, embraces 24,000 of these didactic fragments!

The close of the seventeenth century saw Spain exhausted, by the long-continued wars which had been waged; by the banishment of more than half a million of her inhabitants, who, being descendants of Moors, though conforming outwardly to Christianity, were yet believed by the bigoted monarch to be infidels at heart; by the corruptions which followed the introduction of American gold; by the fearful workings of the Inquisition, and the general servility and blind loyalty of all classes, to a race of weak and imbecile monarchs, closing with Charles II, but descending, in a direct line, from all that was high and noble in the great house of Austria. With the decay of the national spirit, industry and manners, in equal footsteps, the national literature may be said to have decayed and died.

Our paper has grown too rapidly upon us to admit of more than a passing notice of the *third and last period of Spanish history*, embraced in the volumes of Mr. Ticknor, and ending with the restoration to the throne of Ferdinand the Seventh, through British intervention, which event occurred in 1813. There is so little to cheer us in all this period, or to excite our admiration, as in the ages that have gone by and over which we have hung, for many an hour, in breathless interest and delight, that we are less disposed to regret the omission. Has the glory of Spain, indeed, departed forever? We quote from the concluding pages of the history before us:

“But, whether a great advancement may soon be hoped for or not, one thing is certain. The law of progress is on Spain, for good or for evil, as it is on the other nations of the earth; and her destiny, like theirs, is in the hand of God, and will be fulfilled. The material resources of her soil and position are as great as those of any people that now occupies its meted portion of the globe. The mass of her inhabitants, and especially of her peasantry, has been less changed, and, in many respects, less corrupted, by the revolutions of the last century, than any other nation that has pressed her borders, or contended with her power. They are the same race of men who twice drove back the crescent from the shores of Europe, and twice saved, from shipwreck, the great cause of Christian civilization. They have shown the same spirit, at Saragossa, that they showed, two thousand years before, at Saguntum. They are not a ruined people. And, while they preserve the sense of honor, the sincerity and the contempt for what is sordid and base, that have so long distinguished their national character, they cannot be ruined.

Nor, I trust, will such a people—still proud and faithful in its less favored masses, if not in those portions whose names dimly shadow forth the glory they have inherited—fail to create a literature appropriate to a character, in itself, so poetical. The old ballads will not,

indeed, return, for the feelings that produced them are with by-gone things. The old drama will not be revived; society, even in Spain, would not now endure its excesses. The old chroniclers themselves, if they should come back, would find no miracles of valor or superstition to record, and no credulity fond enough to believe them. Their poets will not again be monks and soldiers, as they were in the days when the influences of the old religious wars and hatreds gave both their brightest and darkest colors to the elements of social life; for the civilization that struck its roots into that soil, has died out for want of nourishment. But the Spanish people—that old Castilian race, that came from the mountains and filled the whole land with their spirit—have, I trust, a future before them, not unworthy of their ancient fortunes and fame; a future full of materials for a generous history, and a poetry still more generous; happy, if they have been taught, by the experience of the past, that, while reverence for whatever is noble and worthy is of the essence of poetical inspiration, and, while religious faith and feeling constitute its true and sure foundations, there is yet a loyalty to mere rank and place, which degrades alike its possessor and him it would honor, and a blind submission to priestly authority, which narrows and debases the nobler faculties of the soul more than any other, because it sends its poison deeper. But, if they have failed to learn this solemn lesson, inscribed everywhere, as by the hand of Heaven, on the crumbling walls of their ancient institutions, then is their honorable history, both in civilization and letters, closed forever.”

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